

From: GwenHeisterkamp
Affiliation:
Address: 2332 Wetmore Ave. Apt. 5
Everett, Washington, 98201

Comment: Northeast NPR-A Plan Amendment Bureau of Land Management Alaska State Office
Alaska State Office
222 West 7th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99513-7599

Dear Northeast NPR-A Plan Amendment Alaska State Office,

1 Another area of pristine wildlife habitat to be destroyed by Big Oil? I don't think so.

2 I strongly oppose your preferred alternative for amending the oil and gas leasing plan for the northeastern planning area of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A). I urge you to select Alternative A, the No Action Alternative, and to prepare a new plan that will strengthen the existing environmental and wildlife protection in the area, especially in the critical and fragile Teshekpuk Lake region.

3 The risk to wildlife is simply too great, the consequences too likely to be irreversible. The Interior Department's own data, gathered between 1999 and 2003 indicate that on average, 47 percent of the brant and 44 percent of the white-fronted geese now molt on lakes that would be partly or wholly unprotected in your preferred alternative.

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Birds As a brant educator I have witnessed first hand the majesty of these birds and the incredulity of their journey from the Arctic to Baja, Mexico. I fear their fate as their eelgrass habitat disappears along the coast and as their molting and breeding habitats are destroyed in the Arctic.

5 Further, the preferred alternative would diminish protection for the caribou by fully 75 percent. Neither of these risks is acceptable and neither is necessary. The Inupiat Eskimo people rely on the 45,000-member herd for subsistence and have done so for 8000 years.

6 The entire Teshekpuk Lake Surface Protection Area deserves your most careful protection. Yet, your preferred alternative would reduce protection to a scant 213,000 acres, less than five percent of the planning area. That level of protection will not begin to protect the geese, the caribou or the dozens of other species that now find safety there. Available science clearly indicates that geese are highly sensitive to disturbance during the molt. And it shows that caribou that give birth to their young in this area are also at risk from the kind of disturbance your preferred alternative would permit.

7 At the same time, there is no science to show that these areas, closed under the existing leasing plan, can be safely opened. Your proposal would jeopardize a globally significant ecological resource.

8 Please choose Alternative A, the No Action Alternative, in this plan.

Sincerely,

Website Comment **161699**

161699 (Cont'd)

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Attached: None